

HCS HB 482 -- WORKERS COMPENSATION

SPONSOR: Roden

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass with HCS" by the Standing Committee on Workforce Development by a vote of 8 to 0.

Currently, the law provides that certain diseases of the respiratory and cardiovascular systems, including carcinoma, may be recognized as occupational diseases if a paid firefighter is exposed to certain substances. This bill includes volunteer firefighters in this definition of occupational disease.

The bill also provides for a rebuttable presumption that a paid or volunteer firefighter who contracts cancer has an occupational disease under certain circumstances. The presumption arises if the firefighter was exposed to a known or probable carcinogen and has been assigned to at least five years of hazardous duty as a firefighter.

The bill also requires the Division of Workers Compensation to prepare a biannual report containing specified information about presumed cancer claims filed under the provisions of this bill.

PROPOSERS: Supporters say that adding volunteer firefighters to this bill is warranted because approximately 80% of firefighters are volunteers. In addition, 38 states have some form of presumptive benefits for firefighters who are diagnosed with cancer. This bill will allow firefighters that have been exposed to cancer causing substances while on duty to obtain a presumption that the exposure caused an occupational disease that is eligible for workers' compensation benefits.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Roden; Missouri State Council of Fire Fighters; Linda Goddard; P. Michael Snider, Missouri Fire Service Alliance; and Greg Carrell.

OPPOSERS: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.

OTHERS: Others testifying on the bill say that public entities will need to be aware of any additional costs to taxpayers.

Testifying on the bill was Mehlville Fire Protection District.